



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

## *Southern District of New York*

U.S. ATTORNEY PREET BHARARA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, January 27, 2012  
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

CONTACT: Ellen Davis, Jerika Richardson,  
Carly Sullivan  
(212) 637-2600

### **FARC LEADER SENTENCED TO 294 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR CONSPIRING TO IMPORT COCAINE INTO THE UNITED STATES**

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that IGNACIO LEAL GARCIA, a high-ranking leader of the narco-terrorist organization Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or "FARC") was sentenced today by United States District Judge Thomas F. Hogan in federal court in the District of Columbia to 294 months in prison for conspiring to import ton-quantities of cocaine into the United States. LEAL GARCIA was extradited from Colombia to the United States in July 2010 on an Indictment that charged 50 of the FARC's top leaders. He was convicted in September 2011 after a three-week jury trial.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara stated: "Today's sentence of Ignacio Leal Garcia marks another important milestone in our campaign to dismantle the FARC leadership. And while this is another important victory, our efforts to capture, prosecute, and punish these narco-terrorists continue unabated."

According to the Indictment and evidence presented at trial:

The FARC, which occupies large swaths of territory in Colombia, is a hierarchical organization comprised of twelve to eighteen thousand members. The FARC is led by a central leadership group, and is made up of a number of distinct military units, called Fronts, that are organized by geographical location. These Fronts, in turn are grouped into seven "blocs." The FARC is responsible for the production of more than half of the world's supply of cocaine and nearly two-thirds of the cocaine imported into the United States.

From the late 1990s until his capture on April 8, 2009, LEAL GARCIA was a leader of the FARC's 10th Front, in the Eastern Bloc. Specifically, LEAL GARCIA controlled all cocaine production and cocaine trafficking in Arauca, a Department of Colombia stretching over 9000 square miles near Colombia's border with Venezuela. To exercise this control, LEAL GARCIA organized regular meetings in the various municipalities in Arauca at which he threatened death or exile for anyone who failed to cooperate with the FARC's control of coca farming, cocaine production and cocaine trafficking in the region. Before his capture, LEAL GARCIA orchestrated the manufacture and distribution of ton-quantities of cocaine in Colombia intended for importation into the United States. LEAL GARCIA arranged for the proceeds from the sale

of the cocaine to be used to purchase weapons, explosives, and other supplies to be used by hundreds of guerrillas in the FARC's Eastern Bloc.

\* \* \*

In addition to the prison term, Judge Hogan sentenced LEAL GARCIA to five years of supervised release and ordered him to pay a \$100 special assessment fee.

All four of LEAL GARCIA's co-defendants, who were previously extradited on the same Indictment, have been convicted in federal court in the District of Columbia and sentenced to the following prison terms:

- Gerardo Aguilar Ramirez was sentenced to 29 years in prison;
- Jorge Enrique Rodriguez Mendieta was sentenced to 21 years in prison;
- Erminso Cuevas Cabrera was sentenced to 29 years in prison; and
- Juan Jose Martinez Vega was sentenced to 27 years in prison.

\* \* \*

The investigation resulting in these charges was led by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, working with the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force (which consists of agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department, the United States Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforce Office of Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the New York State Police), the DEA's Bogotá, Colombia, Country Office, and the Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. The investigation, conducted under the auspices of the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Program, involved unprecedented cooperation from the Colombian government.

Mr. Bharara praised all the law enforcement partners involved in the investigation, and thanked the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia for its assistance, as well as the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs and the Criminal Division's Judicial attachés in Bogotá for their involvement in the extradition process.

This case is being prosecuted in the District of Columbia by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Special Assistant United States Attorneys Randall Jackson and Jason Smith are in charge of the prosecution.

12-035

###